

Ellen Heitmann

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EDUCATION

2021 - 2025

DigiPen Institute of Technology

Bachelor of Arts in Game Design, Minor in Psychology
GPA: 3.63; Cum Laude

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Game Studies; Disability Studies; Neuroqueer Theory; Affect Theory; Cultural Studies; Critical Theory; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Feminist Theory; Communications

EMPLOYMENT (academic)

Spring 2025

Teaching Assistant; Identities at Play

DigiPen Institute of Technology

- Mentored 22 students on topics of identity, culture, and structural inequality within video games, covering in-game content, industry, fandom, and academia.
- Provided constructive feedback for 30+ game studies research papers and human-centered design pitches.
- Facilitated hybrid class periods.

Fall 2023; Fall 2024

Teaching Assistant; Narrative Design

DigiPen Institute of Technology

- Mentored 149 students on game narrative design methods across two courses.
- Graded and provided actionable feedback for 100+ video game writing and prototyping assignments.
- Organized weekly workshops and created lecture material on game analysis methods to coach students entering GDC's narrative review competition, 4 of whom won.

AWARDS AND HONORS

2023

Platinum Award

Game Narrative Review Competition

Game Developers Conference

- Authored a 13-page paper critically analyzing the narrative of *Xenoblade Chronicles*.
- Gave a presentation at GDC 2023.

Spring 2025	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Fall 2024	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Spring 2024	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Spring 2023	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology
Spring 2022	Dean's List ; DigiPen Institute of Technology

PROJECTS

Fall 2024 - Present

Public Scholarship Content Creation

YouTube

- Researched, scripted, recorded, and edited 3 rigorous analysis video essays on neurodivergent-coded video game characters, experimenting with principles from affect theory and communications to inform and affirm neurodiverse audiences.
- Integrated 30+ publications and books across disability studies, media studies, and psychology.
- Achieved donations, an 11% like rate, and 100+ comments per video.

Spring 2025

Apocalypse Resort

Research Assistant; User Experience Designer

Research Creation Project

DigiPen Institute of Technology

- Collaborated with Professor Christopher Hawk to design a video game for use in psychology experiments examining prosocial and aggressive behavioral outcomes.
- Conducted research on 20+ commercial video games to ascertain genre trends.
- Wrote accessible game design documentation to facilitate communications among interdisciplinary team members.

Spring 2024 - Spring 2025

Shadow's Grove

Creative Director; Narrative Designer

3D Narrative Adventure Game; Published on Steam

DigiPen Institute of Technology

- Led a team of 27 designers, artists, programmers, and musicians, hosting regular meetings across departments to communicate ideas, solicit feedback, and uphold cohesion.
- Wrote game design documents, scripted 50+ dialogue lines, hosted 30+ playtests, created 2 cinematics, and edited trailers.

- Conducted cultural research, providing inspiration and references for narrative, character design, and architecture.

Fall 2022 - Fall 2023

Strike Back

User Interface Designer; Technical Designer; Associate Producer
2D Fighting Game; Published on Steam

DigiPen Institute of Technology

- Designed game user interface, including 7 menus and a heads-up display in Figma.
- Created documentation detailing inspirations, references, and design intent.
- Implemented user interface into a playable prototype in Unity using C# coding.
- Conducted 30+ playtests and analyzed findings.

EMPLOYMENT (non-academic)

Fall 2025 - Present

Lead Instructor

Snapology

- Instructed groups of up to 20 students on STEM concepts, including engineering, robotics, and architecture.

Summer 2025 - Present

Learning Facilitator

Steamoji

- Guided and encouraged students tackling complex STEAM projects across digital arts, physical computing, fabrication, engineering, and robotics.
- Hosted 30+ orientation trials to recruit new students and improve outreach.

Fall 2023 - Spring 2023

Web Designer; User Researcher

Global Callcenter Solutions

- Conducted research on 50+ competitors and synthesized findings to design a more modern-facing company website.
- Created and implemented introductory videos and animations in Adobe After Effects.